



Testimony Supporting H.B. 7140

National Safety Council
Committee on Transportation
February 25, 2019

The National Safety Council (NSC) submits this testimony in support of H.B. 7140, specifically in support of the provisions addressing seat belts and motorcycle helmets. The National Safety Council (NSC) is a nonprofit organization with the mission of eliminating preventable deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. Our more than 15,000 member companies represent employees at more than 50,000 U.S. worksites, including nearly 500 in Connecticut.

Section 1 – Seat Belt Use

Section 1 and 2 would mandate the use of seat belts by all passengers in front and rear seats of all motor vehicles. Wearing seat belts in all seating positions and properly restraining children into age- and size-appropriate seats cuts the risk of serious death and injury in a motor vehicle in half.

In 2018, 297 people lost their lives in Connecticut in incidents involving motor vehicles, according to NSC estimates.ⁱ Insufficient seat belt use is responsible for too many of these fatalities. In 2016 alone, seat belts saved an estimated 14,668 lives nationally, including 102 people in Connecticut.ⁱⁱ If all people in Connecticut were belted, an additional 18 lives could be saved. The dangers of not wearing a seat belt in the rear seat are especially high – 52 percent of rear seat fatalities were unbelted nationally.ⁱⁱⁱ One study found that unrestrained rear seat occupants were nearly 8 times more likely to sustain a serious injury in a crash.^{iv}

Not only are lives lost when seat belts are not used, so are taxpayer dollars. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that unbelted crash victims have medical bills that are 55 percent higher than belted victims. Society bears the cost of an estimated \$10 billion annually resulting from a lack of seat belt use through increased taxes, insurance premiums and health care costs, lost productivity, and other injury-related costs.^v

Section 3 – Motorcycle Helmet Use

The U.S. has experienced 40,000 motor vehicle fatalities in 2018 for the third year in a row.^{vi} This is an unacceptable number. Data shows us that motorcycle riders and passengers make up a disproportionate percentage of these deaths.^{vii} Requiring motorcycle helmet use is more important than ever. Helmets reduce the risk of brain injury by 69 percent and deaths by 42 percent.^{viii} Additionally, helmet use reduces the cost of medical treatment, the length of hospital stays and the probability of long-term disability for those injured in crashes. According to NHTSA, motorcycle helmets saved 8 lives in Connecticut in 2016 alone, and an additional 14 lives could have been saved if all riders and passengers wore helmets. While this may seem like a small number, each one is a family and community member who did not return home, and whose absence will be felt for years to come.

Strong seat belt and motorcycle helmet laws save lives and reduce associated crash costs. NSC strongly urges you to support H.B. 7140. Moving this bill forward would be a strong signal that Connecticut prioritizes the safety of all its citizens. If you have any questions, please contact Tara Leystra Ackerman, NSC State Government Affairs Manager at tara.leystra@nsc.org or 202-445-3121.



- ⁱ NSC Injury Facts: <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/preliminary-estimates/data-details/>
- ⁱⁱ NHTSA: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812454>
- ⁱⁱⁱ NHTSA: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812465>
- ^{iv} Insurance Institute for Highway Safety: <https://www.iihs.org/iihs/sr/statusreport/article/49/11/3>
- ^v NHTSA: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812013>
- ^{vi} NSC Injury Facts: <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/preliminary-estimates/>
- ^{vii} Governors Highway Safety Association: <https://www.ghsa.org/resources/spotlight-motorcyclists18>
- ^{viii} Derrick, A, Faucher, L, *Motorcycle Helmets and Rider Safety: A Legislative Crisis*, Journal of Public Health Policy Vol. 30, 2, 226-242(2009)